



BOARD OF VISITORS

THE VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

P.O. BOX 2069

STAUNTON, VA 24402-2069

Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.

Board Chairman

December 10, 2014

Minutes of Meeting

Call to Order Senator Hanger called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Roll Call of Members Members present: Senator Emmett Hanger, Senator Barbara Favola, Delegate Dickie Bell, Delegate Tony Wilt, Virgil Cook, John Pleasants, Alice Frick, Mike Asip, Judy Sorrell, Ann Latham-Anderson, and Paula Johnson

Advisors to BOV: Wanda Council, VDOE; Wendell Roberts, AAG; Pat Trice, Interim Superintendent

Senator Hanger declared a quorum.

Approval of September 24, 2014, Minutes John Pleasants moved to adopt the minutes. The motion passed.

Change in order of meeting Senator Hanger asked that Rachel Bavister be allowed to address the Board because she would not be available during the Public Comment time at the end of this meeting. Ms. Bavister expressed concern about meetings happening on campus behind closed doors and requested that information and/or minutes of meetings be shared with the public. Senator Hanger stated that when information is shared with the Board of Visitors, then minutes are made available to the public and posted on the VSDB Web site.

Reports

Superintendent's Report Pat Trice, Interim Superintendent, presented updates on VSDB's 175th anniversary year which is wrapping up. The time capsule opening event was successful. Approximately 300 attended the ceremony. Attendees included alumni, staff, students and dignitaries along with Former Superintendent Sheldon Melton, who participated in the event. Items removed from the time capsule will be placed in a display cabinet in Main Hall and letters written by former students will be scanned and posted on the VSDB Web site. Faithlyn Robinson, photography teacher, shot a video, which will be posted on the VSDB Web site.

The recent Historic Staunton Foundation Christmas House Tour included Main Hall, the chapel, student center and two residential halls. A kickoff party for HSF members was held in the chapel on Saturday night. Many positive comments from the community were shared.

Today's reception for the Proclamation from the General Assembly will take place in the chapel and will include a performance by the VSDB chorus.

Pat continues to work with the Foundation Board, which has recently hired both a part-time grant writer and fundraiser. Pat has met with Secretary of Education, Anne Holton, and her cabinet. Pat wants to schedule a campus visit in the spring for both Secretary Holton and Governor McAuliffe. Due to struggling enrollment VSDB staff has started discussions to expand VSDB's mission such as transition services and expanding the MD program. Future stakeholders' meetings will also be scheduled.

Budget and Grants Janice Rankin, Director of Operations, presented information on the budget. Due, in part, to an all-employee effort to cut back on spending, VSDB is currently 1% under budget. State agencies went on a new accounting system in October. Consequently, Board members will have one deposit to cover both travel and payment.

Grants Report Amy Thornton is a part-time grant writer whose position is funded by the Foundation Board. She reported that eight grant proposals totaling \$26,500 are pending. Five of the grants are targeted for the CROPS and farm programs; one grant is for a work based learning program (student work position); and two grants are for security system upgrades and visitor ID system. Amy, who plans to submit ten to 15 proposals for next quarter, anticipates that between 70 and 80 percent of the grant proposals will be funded.

Human Resources Nate McLamb, Director of Human Resources, presented current staffing vacancies, which total 31 ½ vacancies with three positions pending recruitment, leaving 29 positions open. Positions have been held open to balance the budget. VSDB may need to make cuts in the 2016 budget, which could result in losing positions. When these positions were built into the budget, there were 125 students enrolled. Future positions filled would be driven by increasing enrollment.

A large scale initiative to establish procedures to update policies and keep them updated by priority is currently under way. As policies are updated, they will be sent to Wendell Roberts for approval and then presented to the Board of Visitors for review. The new board members will need to provide a financial disclosure statement, either submitted by hard copy or online. The statement is due at the Human Resources office by December 15. Additionally, new Board members are required to engage in on-line training.

School Report Keith VanFossen, Interim Principal, presented an update of school activities. Current enrollment is 104 with a breakdown of 32 students in the blind department and 72 students in the deaf department. SOL testing will begin in January. Over 500 former students and graduates participated in the deaf-alumni weekend. This year, a VI student is playing on the boys' basketball team, helping to bring the two schools together. The week of December 8 is Homecoming for the deaf department. Both boys' and girls' basketball teams will play against the North Carolina School for the Deaf. The boys' basketball team will travel to Tennessee and the girls' team to Louisiana for the annual Mason-Dixon tournament in January. This tournament was organized by 11 schools for the deaf in southern and eastern states. Students from the blind department are gearing up for goalball season. The music department will present a holiday musical concert on December 11.

A canned food drive to collect 1,000 items for the local food pantry will conclude with Pat, Keith and two teachers getting “pied” (pie in the face by a student).

The blind department teachers have attended training on the initiative for the new Unified English Braille Code. The new Braille Code employs minor, but significant, changes; it will “unify” across all areas with all Braille code being consistent with all English writings. Computer Braille has necessitated these changes and will have an impact on software for embossers. New textbooks and new materials will use the UEB Code, and over time as old material is replaced, VSDB will gradually eliminate old materials. January 2016 is the official implementation date for the new code.

Closed Session Motion for the Board of Visitors Meeting Senator Hanger requested a change in the agenda to allow the Board to review the information from the Division Safety Audit Report to be presented by Blake Porter.

Delegate Bell move that the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind convene in closed session for discussions related to the safety and security plan for the Virginia School for the deaf and Blind in accordance with § 2.2-3711(A)(19) of the Code of Virginia. The motion was seconded, the motion passed.

Delegate Bell moved that the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the deaf and Blind adopt a resolution certifying that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting in which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board of Visitors.

In accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, this shall be a roll call vote. All in favor of adopting the Resolution please vote “AYE” and all opposed vote “NAY”.

Senator Hanger – Aye

Senator Favola – Aye

Delegate Bell – Aye

Delegate Wilt – Aye

Virgil Cook – Aye

John Pleasants – Aye

Alice Frick – Aye

Paula Johnson – Aye

Ann Latham-Anderson – Aye

Judy Sorrell – Aye

Mike Asip – Aye

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind has this day adjourned into Closed Session in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act: and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides for certification that such Closed Session was conducted in conformity with the law.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Visitors does hereby certify that to the best of each member's knowledge:

(i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting in which this certification resolution applies, and

(ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board of Visitors.

The Board of Visitors was polled. The vote was as follows:

Senator Hanger – Aye

Senator Favola – Aye

Delegate Bell – Aye

Delegate Wilt – Aye

Virgil Cook – Aye

John Pleasants – Aye

Alice Frick – Aye

Paula Johnson – Aye

Ann Latham-Anderson – Aye

Judy Sorrell – Aye

Mike Asip – Aye

Senator Favola asked that items needing action be ranked with particular emphasis on the need for all buildings to have security systems.

Senator Favola moved to accept and endorse the Division Safety Audit Report (November 2014). Alice Frick seconded. The motion passed.

Continuing Business Wendell Roberts shared with the Board that he is working on a bequeathed house that VSDB has inherited. The house is located in Wise County and was donated to VSDB by a former student. There is a prospective buyer. The VSDB Counsel, along with other attorneys in the Office of the Attorney General, determined that inserting the Authority in the Governor's Proposed Budget would be the quickest and most efficient way to facilitate the transfer to the VSDB Foundation and sale of the property to the prospective buyer. A Donations Policy may need to be established for future use. A motion to accept the property and pass it on to the Foundation Board was made. The motion passed.

Senator Favola reported that she continues to work on looking at the models of how other state schools place out-of-state students in their programs. Judy Sorrell indicated that she has a lot of information on how to come up with a cost model that she could share with Senator Favola and with Pat. She can go over the figures in drafting a presentation for the March Board meeting. Cost breakdowns would include such areas as instruction, food service, and residential service, which will also help determine costs of current students.

Public Comment Laura Brooks, social studies teacher in the blind department and president of the VSDB Virginia Education Association group, addressed the Board, asking that the Board work in collaboration with school VEA members for future changes at VSDB. VEA members prefer that the academic program continue as an option at VSDB. Laura thanked Pat Trice and the Board for their support. The Board asked Laura to tell the teachers that we appreciate their support.

Senator Hanger stated that the consolidation of the Hampton and Staunton schools has reduced state expenditure from \$20 million to \$10 million, which is a huge cut. VSDB is getting positive press publicity.

Senator Hanger also proposed that the Board bring closure to filling the superintendent position. The Board has four pending applications and will start moving to continue with the interview process and bring a recommendation to the March BOV meeting. Applications can be submitted through December 31.

Senator Hanger would like to see the numbers on successes of mainstreamed students compared to VSDB graduates. He would also like to see the quality of VSDB-student education compared to mainstreaming, including average scores of all students being assessed--SOLs and other testing—as well as graduation and drop-out rates. Such information may help VSDB identify programs needed --special camps, technology, etc. Senator Hanger asked whether a report could be completed in time for the March meeting. Alice Frick asserted that public school administrators and teachers should be made aware of the educational opportunities available at VSDB. Ann Latham-Anderson suggested using social media at the student level to market our school.

The RAW Learning Center continues to be housed in the basement of Battle Hall. Strader and Healy Halls still have parties interested in renting space.

Senator Hanger suggested that a photo of the Board of Visitors be taken on the March meeting date.

The next meeting date is set for Tuesday, March 24, 2015, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Adjournment Senator Hanger moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed.

Virgil A. Cook, Board Secretary